

individual that's out in the remote regions of Darfur, maybe going hungry, definitely worried about violence. But I would repeat to you that in order to solve this problem, there has to be cohesion amongst the rebels and a genuine, real peace process where people sit down seriously—to seriously discuss a better way forward. And the United States will participate. We have participated by sanctioning, to send the signal that we expect the Government to participate seriously. And we're also—by the way, as I told you, we sanctioned a rebel leader—trying to send the same message. It's a terrible situation and one that we hope can be resolved as quickly as possible.

With that, I want to thank you all. Looking forward to seeing you again.

Q. Thank you, same here.

*The President.* Enjoyed it.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 10:25 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to Prime Minister Ehud Olmert of Israel; President Mahmoud Abbas and Prime Minister Salam Fayyad of the Palestinian Authority; former Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom, Quartet Representative in the Middle East; Prime Minister Fuad Siniora of Lebanon; King Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa of Bahrain; Amir Sabah al-Ahmad al-Jabir al-Sabah of Kuwait; Minister of Foreign Affairs Saud al-Faysal bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia; King Mohamed VI of Morocco; President Abdelaziz Bouteflika of Algeria; President Mohamed Hosni Mubarak of Egypt; and United Nations Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Darfur Jan Eliasson. A reporter referred to President Nicolas Sarkozy of France. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

## Remarks Following a Meeting With the President's Working Group on Financial Markets

*January 4, 2008*

I just had a fascinating and productive meeting with the President's Working Group on Financial Markets, chaired by Secretary Paulson. I want to thank the members for working diligently to monitor our capital market system, our financial system. And while there is some uncertainty, the report is, is that the financial markets are strong and solid. And I want to thank you for being diligent.

This economy of ours is on a solid foundation, but we can't take economic growth for granted. And there are signs that will cause us to be ever more diligent and to make sure that good policies come out of Washington. For example, we've had 52 straight months of job creation, but job growth slowed last month. The core inflation is low, but U.S. consumers are paying

more for gasoline and for food. The consumer spending is strong, yet the values on many of the homes in America are beginning to decline and—which leads me to say to the American people: For those of you who are paying more and are worried about your home, we understand that. That's why we have an aggressive policy to help creditworthy people stay in their homes.

The Congress and the President have got to work together when they come back to, one, make sure taxes remain low. If there are—if the foundation is strong yet indicators are mixed, the worst thing that Congress could do is raise taxes on the American people and on American businesses. Secondly, we have got to understand that if we are worried about gasoline prices, we

ought to expand refineries here in the United States, and we ought to explore for oil and gas in environmentally friendly ways in the United States. As I mentioned, the Secretary and Secretary Jackson are leading an initiative on housing called HOPE NOW, but there's legislation that can be passed to make it easier for people to refinance their homes.

And so when Congress comes back, I look forward to working with them to deal with the economic realities of the moment and to assure the American people that we will do everything we can to make sure we remain a prosperous country.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:47 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House.

## The President's Radio Address *January 5, 2008*

Good morning. On Tuesday, I will board Air Force One and depart for a trip to the Middle East. This is a region of great strategic importance to the United States, and I'm looking forward to my visit.

My first stops will be in the Holy Land, where I'll meet with Israeli Prime Minister Olmert and Palestinian President Abbas. I will encourage both leaders to move forward with the peace negotiations they began last November in Annapolis. This is difficult work. It will require tough decisions on complex questions, but I am optimistic about the prospects. And I will make clear that America is deeply committed to helping both parties realize the historic vision we share: two democratic states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security.

During the second part of my trip, I will visit five of America's key allies in the Arab world: Kuwait, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt. I will thank the leaders of these countries for their friendship. I will urge them to strongly support negotiations between the Israelis and Palestinians. I will discuss the importance of countering the aggressive ambitions of Iran. And I will assure them that America's commitment to the security of our friends in the region is strong and enduring.

I know it is not always obvious why events in the nations of the Middle East should matter to the American people. But in the 21st century, developments there have a direct impact on our lives here. As we saw on September the 11th, 2001, dangers that arise on the other side of the world can bring death and destruction to our own streets. Since then, extremists have assassinated democratic leaders from Afghanistan to Lebanon to Pakistan. They have murdered innocent people from Saudi Arabia to Jordan and Iraq. They are seeking new weapons and new operatives so they can attack America again, overthrow governments in the Middle East, and impose their hateful vision on millions.

On my trip, I will consult closely with our partners in the war against these extremists. I will reaffirm our pledge to use every necessary tool of intelligence, law enforcement, diplomacy, finance, and military power to bring our common enemies to justice. The terrorists and extremists will not let down their guard, and we must not let down ours.

At its core, the battle unfolding in the Middle East is more than a clash of arms, it is an ideological struggle. On one side are the forces of terror and death; on the other are tens of millions of ordinary people who want a free and peaceful life for